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U.S Department of Agriculture
Livestock and Seed Programs
Agriculture Marketing Service
Stop 0249 Room 2092-S
Washington, DC 20250-0249

Comments regarding proposal to buy irradiated foods for commodity purchase programs, including the National School Lunch Program:

Although I am not a scientist, I am familiar with the pros and cons of food irradiation. It is clear that those who are against the process have not really studied the process at all. They are no doubt reacting to the word "irradiation" and assume it means that there are radioactive particles on the food following food irradiation that could then harm the person eating irradiated food. This is untrue. Irradiation of food involves exposing the food to an energy source at very low levels that kills food-born pathogens but leaves nothing behind. More research has been done on irradiation than any other food processing technology. It has been deemed safe and effective, and thereby endorsed by all the leading health organizations: the World Health Organization, the American Medical Association, the American Dietetic Association, and the American Council on Science & Health to name just a few.

It has been suggested that if irradiation of food is permitted, there will be a breakdown on the sanitation procedures employed by food processors. This is not at all true. This technology will only be in addition to the processes already in place to assure the safest possible food production.

The goal should be to stop the spread of food-born disease. Using irradiation could be to food what pasteurization has been to dairy products. Remember that when pasteurization was first introduced, it too had many skeptics. Yet now you wouldn't think of drinking milk that hadn't been pasteurized. It is a completely safe process. So is food irradiation.

I encourage the government to proceed with any and all proposals to use irradiation in the processing of foods. We need all the help at our disposal to make food safe for consumption.

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